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Moynihan's resignation smacks of grandstanding

Sen. Moynihan protests too much. He is an old hand in the grey goings on of intelligence and has been a prominent member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence since he was first elected to the Senate in 1976.

As vice chairman of the committee since 1981, and very often as acting chairman in Sen. Goldwater's many absences, he has always known when a guarded statement by CIA officials needed to be probed by further confidential questioning.

HOST OF QUESTIONS

His highly publicized resignation as committee vice chairman — filmed in his office last Friday but broadcast by ABC-TV "This Week" only on Sunday — raises a number of questions.

Why did Moynihan keep CIA director William J. Casey and deputy director Jack McMahon waiting in an antechamber while he made his resignation statement to the ABC-TV cameras?

Further, when he then received Casey and McMahon to review the briefings, why did he not tell them that he had just made his statement resigning as the committee's vice chairman?

If Moynihan's resignation was fit to be given to a TV camera crew would it not have been common decency, to say nothing of politeness, to have informed Casey at the same time?

Why did his New York constituents have to wait two days, courtesy of a TV program, to learn of their Senator's resignation when he could have made it known last Friday?

If Moynihan is as offended as he makes out, why did he not resign immediately when he felt he had been inadequately informed by the CIA?

Moynihan says he was briefed on the mining operation by his senior committee aide just before he voted, on April 6 to approve continuing U.S. support for the Nicaraguan democratic forces, including the mining operations.

Why didn't he resign then? Further, having waited a week to resign the vice chairmanship why didn't he go all the way and resign from the full committee?

FEW SUPPORTERS

Moynihan's sense of outrage about the CIA's briefings is not shared by Rep. Edward Boland (D-Mass.), chairman of the House intelligence committee and an opponent of the mining.

Presumably the House committee gets the same basic CIA briefings as the Senate committee. Yet Boland told the House last Thursday that his committee had been given the most exact details of the mining operation by Casey and that his committee had closely monitored the activity from its start last January.

Boland's committee even recalled Casey to keep itself up with the operation. Thus, on March 27, Casey provided details not only of the ports seeded with the non-lethal "acoustic" mines but the names of ships hit together with their nationalities and cargoes.

~~"There has been some complaint~~

about some other body (the Senate committee) not keeping pace with what was happening," he said. "I know what my responsibilities are and members of our committee knew what their responsibility was to the membership of this House."

AND FURTHERMORE

Nor is Moynihan's righteous indignation shared unanimously by members of his own committee.

Sen. Bentsen (D-Tex.) says there was precise reference to the mining operation in the CIA briefings. Senators Durenberger (R-Minn.), Chafee (R-R.I.), Cohen (R-Me.) and Biden (D-Del.), do not feel the briefings were adequate.

On the other hand, Sen. Garn (R-Utah) is completely satisfied and says: "We were informed twice in March. There are ways and means, if a Senator or Congressman is not lazy, to become informed."

Sen. Lugar (R-Ind.), who voted against the mining, says: "Any Senator, whether he is on the Senate intelligence committee or not, can be as well informed as he wants to be. Any Senator can go to the Senate intelligence committee and read as much as he wishes to read from the classified transcript."

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